

CHANGES IN FEDERAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT: AN UPDATE

April 1998

In response to a number of inquiries, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has updated its analysis of governmentwide trends in federal employment from the 1996 CBO memorandum, *Changes in Federal Civilian Employment*. This update also details trends in employment in agencies engaged in the administration of justice, one of the few major federal employment sectors showing a significant increase. It also examines recent changes in legislative branch employment, as well as how executive branch employment compares with statutory caps.

Most employment totals are an annual average of monthly counts. The totals in the section on statutory employment caps, however, measure employment on a full-time-equivalent (FTE) basis, the measure used in establishing the caps. (FTE totals translate employment to its full-time equivalent. Under that approach, for example, two half-time workers equal one full-time-equivalent worker.) Figures cover most federal agencies except the U.S. Postal Service and those engaged in intelligence gathering. The Postal Service was not included for a number of reasons: it has a completely separate pay system that features collective bargaining, which is rare at the federal level; it is funded from revenues earned from postage; and it is not covered by statutory caps on employment.

Changes in Governmentwide Employment

Federal civilian employment continues to drop. Since 1985, it has experienced a net decrease of 311,200, or 14 percent (see Table 1). Almost all of the decreases in civilian employment have occurred in recent years; between 1996 and 1997 alone, employment fell by 66,000. Most of the decrease continues to occur among civilian workers in the Department of Defense, although reductions in employment in civilian agencies have been significant in recent years.

Increases in Employment in Agencies Engaged in the Administration of Justice

The only significant increase in employment over the 1985-1997 period has occurred in agencies engaged in the administration of justice, a reflection of continued federal efforts to deal with crime. Employment for the judicial branch has risen by 12,200 above the 1985 level, an increase of nearly 70 percent. Employment at the Department of Justice in 1997 was 113,300, or 80 percent, above the 1985 level. Between 1996 and 1997, employment at Justice rose about 6,900, or 7 percent. Almost all the major subdivisions of the department experienced some increase, including the federal prison system, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

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Changes in Legislative Branch Employment

Legislative branch employment for 1985 through 1997 fell by 8,000, or 20 percent. Most of those reductions took place after 1993 and reflect efforts by the Congress to reduce costs and streamline operations (see Table 2).

Changes in Executive Branch Employment Compared with Statutory Caps

The Federal Workforce Restructuring Act of 1994 established caps on total employment in the executive branch for each year from 1994 through 1999. By 1999 that law, as amended, would reduce employment, measured on an FTE basis, to 1.88 million. Recent estimates indicate that employment is already below the caps (see Table 3).

This analysis was prepared by R. Mark Musell of CBO's Special Studies Division.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF FEDERAL CIVILIAN WORKERS BY BRANCH AND AGENCY, FISCAL YEARS 1985-1997
(In thousands of workers)

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Change, 1985-1997		Change, 1996-1997	
														Num- ber	Per- cent	Num- ber	Per- cent
Legislative Branch	39.4	37.8	37.6	38.1	37.9	37.9	38.2	39.1	38.7	36.9	34.4	32.4	31.4	-8.0	-20.3	-1.0	-3.1
Judicial Branch	17.6	18.6	19.5	20.8	21.5	22.6	24.6	27.0	28.1	27.9	28.3	29.0	29.8	12.2	69.3	0.8	2.8
Executive Branch																	
Departments																	
Agriculture	115.4	111.2	111.0	115.2	117.8	118.9	118.4	122.3	120.9	115.6	109.1	105.1	102.8	-12.6	-10.9	-2.3	-2.2
Commerce	35.5	35.1	34.5	39.5	49.1	155.9	45.5	37.8	38.3	37.7	37.3	35.8	34.6	-0.9	-2.5	-1.2	-3.4
Defense	1,080.3	1,088.5	1,084.0	1,072.8	1,066.9	1,060.0	1,014.7	1,003.7	952.1	900.3	851.8	811.3	767.8	-312.5	-28.9	-43.5	-5.4
Education	5.1	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.1	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.6	-0.5	-9.8	-0.2	-4.2
Energy	16.8	16.7	16.7	16.8	17.1	17.5	18.6	20.5	20.7	20.2	20.0	18.8	17.5	0.7	4.2	-1.3	-6.9
HHS ^a	141.8	136.9	130.3	123.9	122.6	123.0	126.3	131.6	131.6	129.6	127.6	124.6	126.1	-15.7	-11.1	1.5	1.2
HUD	12.3	11.9	12.5	13.2	13.4	13.5	13.8	14.1	13.3	13.1	12.3	11.6	11.1	-1.2	-9.8	-0.5	-4.3
Interior	76.2	74.2	72.5	74.0	75.2	75.0	76.4	80.4	81.5	79.5	75.5	70.4	68.7	-7.5	-9.8	-1.7	-2.4
Justice	62.9	65.3	67.7	73.4	78.9	81.6	87.0	94.8	98.0	97.8	100.5	106.4	113.3	50.4	80.1	6.9	6.5
Labor	18.3	18.0	17.8	18.1	18.4	17.9	17.7	18.0	17.7	17.1	16.5	15.6	15.4	-2.9	-15.8	-0.2	-1.3
State	25.1	25.4	25.4	25.7	25.3	25.3	25.5	25.9	26.1	25.9	25.1	24.6	24.2	-0.9	-3.6	-0.4	-1.6
Transportation																	
Subtotal	62.4	61.6	61.7	62.7	64.6	66.5	67.8	70.3	70.0	66.9	63.8	63.0	63.2	0.8	1.3	0.2	0.3
Treasury	134.7	138.3	147.0	162.8	163.5	162.2	169.1	169.8	164.3	159.7	163.3	156.7	151.5	16.8	12.5	-5.2	-3.3
VA ^b	244.7	243.8	246.3	246.7	245.2	247.3	252.7	257.8	263.8	264.2	262.0	256.2	245.7	1.0	0.4	-10.5	-4.1
Subtotal	2,031.5	2,031.6	2,032.0	2,049.5	2,062.6	2,169.4	2,038.4	2,052.1	2,003.3	1,932.5	1,869.7	1,804.9	1,746.5	-285.0	-14.0	-58.4	-3.2
Independent Agencies																	
GSA	27.7	24.9	22.0	20.4	19.9	20.2	20.6	21.1	20.7	19.8	17.2	15.9	14.6	-13.1	-47.3	-1.3	-8.2
NASA	22.5	22.1	22.6	22.9	24.2	24.5	25.3	25.6	25.2	24.1	22.6	21.4	20.3	-2.2	-9.8	-1.1	-5.1
All other	128.8	129.0	131.1	133.9	127.4	134.4	139.8	140.0	140.2	138.1	128.3	118.7	113.7	-15.1	-11.7	-5.0	-4.2
Subtotal	179.0	176.0	175.7	177.2	171.5	179.1	185.7	186.7	186.1	182.0	168.1	156.0	148.6	-30.4	-17.0	-7.4	-4.7
Total	2,210.5	2,207.6	2,207.7	2,226.7	2,234.1	2,348.5	2,224.1	2,238.8	2,189.4	2,114.5	2,037.8	1,960.9	1,895.1	-315.4	-14.3	-65.8	-3.4
All Agencies	2,267.5	2,264.0	2,264.8	2,285.6	2,293.5	2,409.0	2,286.9	2,304.9	2,256.2	2,179.3	2,100.5	2,022.3	1,956.3	-311.2	-13.7	-66.0	-3.3
Memorandum:																	
U.S. Postal Service	733.9	782.7	810.3	827.7	839.9	824.3	813.5	800.9	786.6	813.6	842.0	858.4	860.1	126.2	17.2	1.7	0.2
Total Postal and Other Agencies	3,001.4	3,046.7	3,075.1	3,113.3	3,133.4	3,233.3	3,100.4	3,105.8	3,042.8	2,992.9	2,942.5	2,880.7	2,816.4	-185.0	-6.2	-64.3	-2.2

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using data provided by the Office of Personnel Management.

NOTES: Data are averages of monthly employment counts. Averages cover both permanent and temporary appointments, as well as full-time, part-time, and other schedules. All geographic areas are represented, as are all agencies except the Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence-gathering organizations.

The table's memorandum shows an employment total that includes the U.S. Postal Service. Employees of that agency have a separate pay system funded by the sale of stamps. The agency is off-budget and was not part of efforts to reduce employment under the Federal Workforce Restructuring Act of 1994.

HUD = Department of Housing and Urban Development; GSA = General Services Administration; NASA = National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

- a. Data for the Department of Health and Human Services include the Social Security Administration, which became an independent agency in 1995.
- b. The Department of Veterans Affairs replaced its predecessor, the Veterans Administration, in March 1989.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH EMPLOYEES BY AGENCY, 1993-1997 (In thousands of workers)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Number	Change, 1993-1997 Percent
Congress	20.5	20.1	18.1	17.5	17.3	-3.2	-15.7
General Accounting Office	5.1	4.6	4.4	3.7	3.4	-1.7	-34.0
Government Printing Office	4.8	4.4	4.2	3.9	3.6	-1.2	-24.4
Library of Congress	5.0	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.5	-0.5	-10.3
Other	<u>3.3</u>	<u>3.2</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>2.6</u>	<u>-0.7</u>	<u>-21.2</u>
Total	38.7	36.9	34.4	32.4	31.4	-7.3	-18.8

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using data provided by the Office of Personnel Management.

NOTE: Data are averages of monthly employment counts.

TABLE 3. EXECUTIVE BRANCH EMPLOYMENT COMPARED WITH STATUTORY
EMPLOYMENT CAPS (In thousands of workers)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Actual Employment	2,052.7	1,970.2	1,891.7	1,834.7	n.a.	n.a.
Employment Caps	2,084.6	2,043.3	2,003.3	1,963.3	1,922.3	1,882.3

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using data provided by the Office of Management and Budget.

NOTES: Totals are full-time equivalents. Data cover executive branch agencies only.

n.a. = not applicable.
